

Psalm 023 - Messianic Psalm: The Shepherd Psalms: The Living Shepherd

Psalm 23

[A Psalm of David.]

The LORD Shepherds His People

1 The LORD is my **shepherd**, I will not be in need.

1 The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.

1 The LORD is the one who is shepherding me; I lack nothing.

1 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

- "...shepherd" - the verb is a participle meaning "is shepherding me": guarded, led, provided food, rest, rescue

2 He lets me lie down in green pastures; He **leads** me beside quiet waters.

2 He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters.

2 He causes me to lie down in pastures of green grass; he guides me beside quiet waters.

2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

- "...leads" - leads gently

3 He restores my soul; He guides me in the **paths** of righteousness For the sake of His name.

3 He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake.

3 He revives my life; he leads me in pathways that are righteous for the sake of his name.

3 He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

- "...paths" - well-worn ruts (avoid strange teachings, Heb 13:9)

4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your **rod** and Your **staff**, they comfort me.

4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

4 Even when I walk through a valley of deep darkness, I will not be afraid because you are with me. Your rod and your staff—they comfort me.

4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

- The central verse: notice the personal pronoun changes from "He" to "You"

- David is not speaking *about* the shepherd, but *to* the shepherd! He is beside us, leading and calming our fears.
- "...rod" - cudgel, for defense
- "...staff" - crook, to assist individual sheep, for counting or examination

5 You prepare a **table** before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with **oil**; My cup overflows.

5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows.

5 You prepare a table before me, even in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

- "...table" - a synecdoche for a "spread": food, provision...

- "...oil" - used to soothe end-of-day bruises, etc.

6 Certainly goodness and faithfulness will follow me all the days of my life, And my dwelling will be in the **house of the LORD forever**.

6 Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

6 Truly, goodness and gracious love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will remain in the LORD's Temple forever.

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

- The OT equivalent of Rom 8:28

- "...house of the LORD forever" - this is not a reference to the Temple: the king did not live in the Temple

— David looks ahead to eternity in the Father's house—forever (Cf. John 17:1-6)

- The shepherd would also block the doorway during the night (John 10:7-9; Cf. Rev 7:17)

Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd

I shall lack nothing

I shall not lack provision

I shall not lack peace

I shall not lack guidance

I shall not lack courage of the dark hour

I shall not lack true comfort

I shall not lack protection, preservation, honor
I shall never lack joy
I shall never lack fullness of blessing
I shall not lack Divine favor during my earthly life
I shall not lack a heavenly home when my earthly tour is over

David Powlison (1949-2019) once inverted Psalm 23 to portray what life feels like and looks like whenever God vanishes from sight. He called it AntiPsalm 23:

I'm on my own.
No one looks out for me or protects me.
I experience a continual sense of need. Nothing's quite right.
I'm always restless. I'm easily frustrated and often disappointed.
It's a jungle--I feel overwhelmed.
It's a desert--I'm thirsty.
My soul feels broken, twisted, and stuck. I can't fix myself.
I stumble down some dark paths.
Still, I insist: I want to do what I want, when I want, how I want.
But life's confusing. Why don't things ever really work out?
I'm haunted by emptiness and futility--shadows of death.
I fear the big hurt and final loss.
Death is waiting for me at the end of every road, but I'd rather not think about that.
I spend my life protecting myself.
Bad things can happen.
I find no lasting comfort.

I'm alone...facing everything that could hurt me.
Are my friends really my friends?
Other people use me for their own ends.
I can't really trust anyone. No one has my back.
No one is really for me--except me.
And I'm so much about me, sometimes it's sickening.
I belong to no one except myself.
My cup is never quite full enough.
I'm left empty.
Disappointment follows me all the days of my life.
Will I just be obliterated into nothingness?
Will I be alone forever, homeless, free-falling into void?

Sartre said, "Hell is other people."
I have to add, "Hell is also myself."
It's a living death, and then I die.